in my faults - blindness, self-esteem &c. So that if you have now discovered that I have not an ounce of perception &c. it is not that I tried to deceive you. And I think I've always said that you exaggerated my merits as a critic.

But please believe that I am very glad of the frankness with which you have written.

Of course I could go on to justify & explain myself, but I don't feel that there's any need in it.

V.

NYPL

Rota 2.4.63

July 6. 1931

Monks House. Saturday

Let me put it like this.

As I think I told you, I had promised to have the Waves done by July Ist--last Wednesday. I discovered however that I must make one very difficult and radical change before I could let it go. I calculated that by giving up Monday Tuesday and Wednesday to writing, and not merely to writing but to concentration of a very complete kind I might be able to do it (But I have not).

On Monday morning your letter arrived. At the same time I was told something in confidence about a friends life that moved and upset me very much; at the same time I was asked to consider a plan that needs considerable thought and it may be action. I confess that your letter with its multitudinous embroidery of a personal grievance seemed (quite apart from its references to my character and conduct) to make a huge and at the moment unwarrantable demand on my sympathy. I had the sense afterwards to reflect that such demands upon the sympathy and attention of your friends are inevitable. One must remember your temperament, your struggles, your difficulties, your loneliness, your unhappiness, and the peculiar strain which as a musician you have to undergo. It is quite natural, as I see, that a chance joke gets upon your nerves and rouses you to a sense of intolerable hardship. I dont blame you; I see it must be so; I see that it is the penalty that life exacts.

But it does I think put great difficulties in the way of intercourse. And I dont think that they are the difficulties that you speak of. Scenes and rages and moments of misunderstanding are a bore and a pity and take up time and harass ones mind ; but they pass and one forgets them. What does not pass, and is not forgotten is the feeling that one is prevented from intimacy. Your extreme susceptibility to criticism and your vast (if entirely natural) need of sympathy inevitably make one feel that one cannot be at ones ease, and free, and careless with you as with other people; that one cannot expect the same intuiton and understanding from a woman who is naturally and rightly as absorbed as you are in your own

. damaging

Dame Ethel Smyth

Coign

Woking

Cruder

past and present and futiure. One therefore feels that one is limiting one self, being simpler, and less communicative than is natural. The same thing has happened to me twice before --once with my father. I adored him [illegible] But then, he had had a very hard life with his deafness. my mother's death, and his sense of being, as a philosopher, a failure. Thus he demanded and needed perptual sympathy and was apt to fly into violent rages and despairs in what we thought a most unreasonable way if anyone spoke a careless word about his work, or his life. Hence by degrees one felt that one had always to pick and choose what one said to him and never dared tell him the small events thzt interested us, for he might at any moment fly off with 'Oh but think what my life has been, what my sufferings are, what I have been going through since your mother died!' And I think this queered the pitch and made us much more formal and cautious with him than was right. And it happened again with a woman who was in love with me, and used to write me reams about not understanding her life and her misunder stood virtues (for she thought herself the greatest psychologist in England)

2 to we parted. Now to brush all this aside--this quarrel--and say "O but I'm so devoted to you; lets kiss and be friends", seems to me childish. NYPL Yet as I say I dont see how you can help yourself. When the Wreckers is done you natura lly need much more sympathy than I do when the Waves is published. And one is sure to laugh and be casual about it. (Also I dont think you realise how much you emphasise, from good motives I'm sure, the difficulties of the musician; your own struggle; the horror of the critics--I beli ve I could pass an examination in whats been said and written about you and by you since you were six years old--but here again, you reiterate partly because of your championship of the under dog--but its a nail that has gone through my head) Therefore there will be other quarrels. And what is worse I shall be feeling; well, surely she might see that one has other difficulties, other struggles, other interests--- Of course I see that this is not so with your old friends, like Mrs Woodhouse or Lady Betty, but how can it help being so with you who were seventy, and I who was 48 when we first met? I'm sure this is crudely put, for I'm hurried; but perhaps you'll see how it puzzles me. I dont care for unreal friendships; and if one thing emerges from these letters it is the extreme unreality of a relationship which leads to all these words.

Rota 2.V.63

P.S.

I forgot to say that I underlined in blue your remark about the Interim passage in the Waves by mistake. It didnt in the least annoy me. It interested me very much, and I meant to ask you wh what you meant. I should like to know.

No Leonard does not think you a 'tame tiger', but another animal, less dignified, but more sonorous.

Monday 4.30 would suit me better than Wednesday if its the same to you.

V.

a furious old gentleman in Manchester, colonel with the Blowers, has attacked me for what he's pleased to call Iconoclasm. I'm replying, in my well known style, something spicy about

52,
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W.C.1.
Telephone : Museum 2621.

Tuesday. 7th July 1931

orgasm making a rhyme.

Well Ethel dear, I'm very glad that the brown cat – oh no I mean the happy the hirsute, the erect, the bristling & bristling cat – in fact the hedgehog, has gone to bed happy – (laugh) I don't approve of a woman whose who has learned her last hairpin to produce what she considers — hum-ha – one must be very careful in future – no jokes, no allusions to certain foibles – I'm sorry I was going to say before my Evil Devil led me astray, that you showed Epsom Letter so that they cost 7d. instead of 9d. But

then I like getting them at irregular hours, with the Emphasis
& the unexpected on them - lying stamped on hall tables when I come in,
hot & dreary, from morning me pillar in the Wave half an
inch to the right, having moved it yesterday three quarters of an
inch to the left. It's not the working of the Waves that takes
the Time, but the architecture: & its not right yet, & feel know,
& my eyes not out, & I'm only moving round in a circle. But
this explains perhaps certain absences of mind, & Hoots Cannon
bolts down the telephone. Lord! how I like the thud of my
shoe upon your hide. I think I shall make a practice of it
"Ethel. D'ye know you're a damned Harlot - a hoary harpy - a
an eldritch shriek of Egotism - a hail storm of wrathchild
inconsecutive & incoherent Conceit - That's all" And I shall
bring off. I forgot what I started out to say. Never
mind - this is just a belt at
your hide. V.

Rota 3. V. 63

Sunday July 12. 1931

What G. Lowes Dickinson said was (not to me but to Lucas) that he had been reading, first I think, The Resources with great interest, & great admiration. He had then gone on to Law & Anarchy which he found also most sympathetic; he admired the writing, found the ideas akin to his own; & so went on to read a third, in French; & was increased in his admiration. Lucas said that HB was doing much what G. L. D. does, or attempts; but G. L. D. said no, HB. was doing something of his own,

& something which interested him (G. L. D) very greatly.
G L D. is a writer, as you may know, of Platonic dialogues
about law society the soul, duty, love, work &c:
& a very charming man, & the fine flower of Cambridge
culture. How he got at H B. I dont know: anyhow
he seems to have put up a good fight against whatever
objections & made, & to have been discriminating, detailed &
unprejudiced. There — I dont remember the seven G L D. his
words verbatim; but you can gather the gist. And
I think this a great compliment, because, like the
rest of his tribe, G L D is very fastidious, instructed &

NYPL

only says what, on deep consideration with & Complete
regard for the Truth, he thinks. How unlike us,
Miss Beale & Miss Bass.

I don't suppose I shall be able to come tomorrow,
greatly though I should like to hear the cold
Christmas blag Bach. Life is too much work for us,
Cats & rooms sweeping & mending, we lay waste our
powers. (another quotation) Ona this bloody book
is done. I shall fling my hats in the air, &

be just for ever of writing sentences. Lord what a happy life — never to write again. At the moment the thought of not writing fills me with delirious joy, too far I fear to the true. What the use, if a book is fundamentally unreadable, like the Waves, of correcting Commas?

So you can judge the mood in which I scribble these hasty lines, hoping to send you in the Punch as they leave me — some evening I write all quotations.

Yrs

V Sackville-West

NYPL

Rota 2.4.63

all physical delight left with you – why shouldn't I sketch my
muscle in a sale, haul down flats & anchors & fly before the
North East to the Pole?

Sunday. July 19 1931

Dear Ethel. Leonard has read it – The Waves – & likes it, & I'm so relieved I'm like a girl with an engagement ring. It's true he thinks very few people will survive the first 100 pages. And I must now see if I can't simplify & clarify a little on his hints: but he doubts that I can. Anyhow that's over: & I'm, as I say, as light as a feather, with sheer irresponsible relief. And now I can spend a whole hour

Dame Ethel Smyth

July 19 Coign

Woking

1931

Wars!

putting just here in wait & needst hurry down to
my commas & semi-colons in a state of
torpor, distrust, & somnolent hostility. NYPL Here's an
eldritch screech & egotism of you like. But
my word—there's getting that MS. out of the
house an heavy labour. & no proofs for a fortnight.
A very stormy week end: Elm trees almost
down, & flowers broken by rutting cats howling
all night in the wind. They made their marriage bed in
the privet William, & their progeny will be fined.)
imagine. And I'm buying a boat & taking to the
Lea. Why should

Acts 2.4.63

Dame Ethel Smyth
C.B.E.

July 23 Coign
1931 Woking

Thursday. 23rd July 1931

Ethel, C.B.E, — I felt very complacent & pumpaytious & Grombookish with the Parsons. when I saw you go off, duffing into the furnace this afternoon — also red roaring Lachety tacketty ramphapois at the thought of that muffin faced Austrian making off with your nest egg, your very small bantam, laid with much precision between two, big Jack magnificent Dalmatian fiery cock — I should say hen. How d'you like my new vocabulary, ? I'm so delighted to be released from Mrs. Meynell clautrophobia — no word not even Miltons Tombstone to be used again, ; all that hard boiled acidity — when my veins run liquid Language, & fe red hot ram. By the